

1 John 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Analysis

Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

John creates apparent paradox: verse 7 said "not new" yet verse 8 says "a new commandment" (palin entolēn kainēn). This isn't contradiction but dialectical truth. The commandment is "old" in origin (given from the beginning) yet "new" (kainēn) in the sense of fresh, renewed, eschatologically significant—made new in Christ's fulfillment and the believer's experience.

"Which thing is true in him and in you" (ho estin alēthes en autō kai en hymin)—the commandment's truth is demonstrated both "in him" (Christ perfectly embodied it) and "in you" (believers now live it through union with Christ). The newness consists in Christ's incarnation and the Spirit's indwelling power making obedience possible. What the law commanded externally, grace accomplishes internally.

"Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (hoti hē skotia paragetai kai to phōs to alēthinon ēdē phainei)—"is past" (paragetai) means is passing away, in process of dissolution. The old age of darkness is being displaced by the new age of light. "The true light" (to phōs to alēthinon) is Christ (John 1:9, 8:12). "Now shineth" (ēdē phainei) emphasizes present reality—the eschaton has broken into history. Believers live in the overlap of ages: darkness passing, light

shining. The love commandment is "new" because it's empowered by the new creation inaugurated in Christ.

Historical Context

Jewish eschatology divided history into "this age" (characterized by sin, darkness, oppression) and "the age to come" (characterized by God's kingdom, light, righteousness). Most Jews expected a decisive break—Messiah would end this age and inaugurate the next. Christianity proclaimed something unexpected: the ages overlap. Christ's first coming inaugurated the new age, but the old age continues until His return. Believers live in the "already/not yet"—already experiencing new creation life, not yet seeing full consummation.

Paul describes believers as those "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). The "true light" has dawned (Isaiah 9:2, fulfilled in Matthew 4:16), yet darkness persists. This eschatological tension explains why the commandment is both old and new—old in divine intention, new in Christ's fulfillment and the Spirit's empowerment.

The Gnostic teachers denied this eschatological framework. They viewed salvation as escape from material existence into timeless spiritual reality. John insists salvation is historical and eschatological—Christ entered history, inaugurated the new age, and will return to consummate it. Living in the dawning light transforms how believers obey the "old" commandment—not through flesh-powered effort but Spirit-enabled love flowing from new creation life.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding you live in the overlap of ages (darkness passing, light shining) shape your expectations and responses to sin and suffering?
2. In what ways is the love commandment "new" for you—not merely a duty but a reality empowered by Christ's finished work and the Spirit's presence?
3. How can you cultivate awareness that the "true light" is already shining, transforming your ability to obey what was previously impossible?

Interlinear Text

πάλιν	ἐντολὴν	καὶ νέην	γράφω	ὑμῖν	ὅ	ἐστιν		
Again	commandment	a new	I write	unto you	which thing	is		
G3825	G1785	G2537	G1125	G5213	G3739	G2076		
ἀληθὲς	ἐν	αὐτῷ	καὶ	ἐν	ὑμῖν	ὅτι	ἡ	σκοτία
true	in	him	and	in	unto you	because	G3588	the darkness
G227	G1722	G846	G2532	G1722	G5213	G3754	G4653	

παράγεται	καὶ	τὸ	φῶς	τὸ	ἀληθινὸν	ἡδη	φαίνει
is past	and	G3588	light	G3588	the true	now	shineth
G3855	G2532		G5457		G228	G2235	G5316

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 5:8 (Light): For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Romans 13:12 (Light): The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

John 13:34 (Word): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 8:12 (Light): Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 1:9 (Truth): That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 12:46 (Light): I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

1 John 4:21 (Word): And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Malachi 4:2 (Parallel theme): But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Acts 17:30 (Parallel theme): And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Acts 26:18 (Light): To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.